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ABSTRACT

Private education is crucial to the vitality of this nation, and public policy should strengthen rather than diminish it. In spite of chronic complications, the nonpublic school movement has remained vigorous and strong. Over 5.3 million young people--10 percent of all elementary and secondary students--are enrolled in nonpublic institutions. Because of their freedom and flexibility, America's nonpublic schools have a special opportunity and obligation to push for excellence and to search for new alternatives in education. Nonpublic schools are also needed because of their focus on values and the human spirit. The United State Office of Education (USOE) is determined to maintain and strengthen the great heritage of private education. First, USOE is determined to increase its communication with private institutions. Second, USOE plans to increase the advisory role of nonpublic schools in its work. Third, and perhaps most significant, USOE is determined to see that nonpublic school children are fully served by those federal programs for which they are eligible. (Author/JG)

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THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION, THE STATES AND THE PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Ernest L. Boyer
United States Commissioner of Education

I am delighted to be with you this evening to share in this important convocation.

I also want you to know how pleased I am that the United States Office of Education could join with CAPE (Council for American Private Education) in sponsoring this week's nonpublic education conference.

Private education is absolutely crucial to the vitality of this Nation, and public policy should strengthen rather than diminish these essential institutions.

After all, private education is rooted deep in this Nation's heritage; the first schools and colleges in this country were, in large part, private institutions; distinguished leaders in all walks of life have studied at nonpublic schools; and many of America's independent institutions have contributed brilliantly--and enduringly--to the Nation's heritage.

It is fascinating to recall that in 1875, the United States Commissioner of Education reported that nine of America'a academies which were founded before the Declaration of Independence, were--one century later--still in operation. The Commissioner's list included: The Latin Grammar School of Boston, 1635; The Hopkins Grammar School of New Haven, 1660; Germantown Academy of Pennsylvania, 1759; Dummer Academy of Byfield, Massachusetts, 1763; Columbia Grammar School of New York, 1764; University Grammar School of Providence, 1764; Rutgers College Grammar School of New Jersey, 1766; Charlotte Hall School of Maryland, 1774; and Kingston Academy of Kingston, New York, 1774.

Unhappily, Commissioners of Education are not always 100 percent correct, and, at least two other schools should have been on the Commissioner's honor list: The Collegiate School of New York, founded in 1639; and the Roxbury Latin School of Massachusetts, founded in 1645.

On the other hand, I am delighted to report that of these eleven institutions--all founded before our Declaration of Independence--ten are still in operation--though their names may have been altered somewhat--and, eight continue to this day as private schools.

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This is a remarkable tribute to the vigor and the vision of the leaders of these outstanding institutions.

Parenthetically, it should be noted that the term "free school," which was used so frequently in those early days, was by no means restricted to what we today call the public school. In fact, the so-called "free schools" were more often privately sponsored institutions.

In his "American Journal of Education," Henry Barnard, America's first Commissioner of Education, explained it this way:

> The ". . . Free School" . . . he said . . . "was not intended [to be] the Common or Public School . . ..
>
> "Neither was it a charity school, exclusively for the poor. . ..
>
> "The 'free schools' of New England . . . were designed especially for instruction in Latin and Greek and were supported in part by payment of tuition or rates by parents.
>
> "They were," Barnard said "the well-spring of classical education."

The emergence of the public school system in this Nation--which was itself a marvelous testimony to human dignity and social progress--was viewed at first as a threat to the network of nonpublic schools.

But the visionaries of that day understood full well that America's public and nonpublic institutions could and should function side by side.

In 1889, Nathan Mathews, Jr., testified before the Massachusetts Joint Education Committee in opposition to a bill which sought to place private schools under the control of local school committees. Mathews said: "We object . . . to the doctrine that all education should be uniform, the same for all schools and all scholars; and we deny the right of the Legislature to subject the education of our children to the arbitrary and final dictation of the local school committee."

The independance of the private sector was vigorously affirmed.

There have of course been rough spots for private institutions and this audience hardly needs to be reminded that in recent years: costs have escalated; enrollments have been threatened by declining birth rates; student values have sharply shifted; and at some institutions, cherished traditions have been challenged.

And yet, in spite of chronic complications, the nonpublic school movement in this country has remained vigorous and strong. Today, as Bob Lamborn has reminded us, there are over 20,000 private schools in the United States, with over 270,000 teachers. Over 5.3 million young people--or 10 percent of all elementary and high school students in this country--are enrolled in nonpublic institutions.

I'm convinced that this sustained vitality is no mere accident. Nonpublic institutions have continued to exist and even flourish first because of their educational richness and diversity.

In 1770, when John and Samuel Phillips gave 141 acres of land and 1,614 pounds to establish Phillips Andover Academy, the deed said that the new school was:

> ". . . to lay the foundation of a public free school or academy for the purpose of instructing youth not only in English and Latin Grammar, Writing, Arithmetic and those Sciences wherein they are commonly taught,
>
> "but more especially to learn them the great end and real business of living."

What a remarkably noble purpose for an emerging institution, to teach students "the great end and the real business of living."

During my own formal education I experienced, first hand, the marvelously diverse tapestry of America's nonpublic institutions. I attended a small, private liberal arts college in Illinois where I received my AB degree. As student body president I learned lessons of leadership I would not have encountered at a larger, more complicated institution. I was a graduate student at a large private, urban university where I received advanced degrees. I taught at a small church-related college where later I became academic dean--it was probably the world's smallest accredited postsecondary institution, with slightly over 100 fulltime students--and yet it was very rich in tradition and in vision. I taught at Loyola University, a Jesuit institution, and there I learned to know and deeply respect the president, Father Charles Cossosa, who was noble and a daily inspiration.

I recall each of these institutions with a special warmth and with deep gratitude. I learned to respect each one, for its honorable heritage, for its dedicated faculty, and for what Al Senske called yesterday their "distinctive purposes."

Over 50 years ago, Samuel A. Drury in his book entitled School Mastery observed that: "The private school excels in one great particular--that of personality."

We have all experienced this elusive yet essential characteristic called the personality of an institution, and I'm convinced that because of the great diversity among America's nonpublic schools, education in this great Nation has been enormously enriched.

But private schools have helped in other ways as well.

Because of their independence and inventiveness, nonpublic schools have also sparked innovation and excellence in our midst. At the Asheville School in North Carolina, a secondary boarding school for boys, every Monday the regular school day is abolished and each student pursues a special project. One project involves work in local hospitals, museums, zoos and other public or private community facilities. A second project involves academic studies in the community, such as Appalachian Folk Music, art at the Biltmore House and hiking projects in Pisgah Forest. Students write reports of their activities and discuss their experiences with the faculty advisors. Projects change each quarter. At the All Souls School in Overland, Missouri, you will find many parents mingling with teachers and with students. Parents help the teachers and the librarian, and serve as "secretary for the day." Parents work in the school cafeteria and help on

the playground and with maintenance work. Not only is there savings for the school, but parents become much more involved in the academic program. At St. Johns High School in Toledo, student volunteers serve as tutors in day care centers. Since 1973, St. Johns' students have worked during the summer at the Glennmary Home in Kentucky helping the rural area social services agencies.

Again, my own educational experience was instructive.

While academic dean at a small private college, I wanted to experiment with a new campus-wide curriculum.

I also felt we should have more free time on campus for students and faculty to confront together common academic problems.

After working closely with faculty and students, we agreed to reorganize the academic calendar. We would have two conventional semesters and then add a January term--a midyear mini-term--a time when new experimental programs could be introduced on campus.

That innovation, which we launched nearly 20 years ago at a small private school in California, became known nationwide as the 4-1-4 calendar, and it has been adopted by over 300 colleges all across the land.

I look back on those days with a special satisfaction--a time when we were able to dream of new directions, and when we also had the freedom to see our dreams come true.

I also learned a very crucial lesson. I learned that it is the significance of the idea, not the size of the institution that matters most, and I'm convinced that, because of their freedom and their flexibility, America's nonpublic schools do have a special opportunity and a special obligation to push for excellence and to search for new alternatives in education.

Finally I am confident we need nonpublic schools because of their focus on values and the human spirit.

I recognize that whenever the discussion turns to values, a strange embarrassment seems to overtake us all. Somehow we have deluded ourselves into believing that we can be responsible people without ever taking sides, without expressing firm conviction: about fundamental issues. And all too frequently those of us in education seem ready and willing to talk about any and all subjects, except those that matter most. We are caught up in the thick of things--failing to develop within our students the capacity to make judgments, to form convictions, to act boldly upon the values which they hold.

In his penetrating book, Faith and Learning, Alexander Miller commented rightly on this curious timidity when he wrote: "A decent tentativeness is a wholesome expression of scholarly humility. We seem to have a sort of dogmatic tentativeness which suggests that (in matters of moral judgment, at least) it is intellectually indecent to make up your minds."

But there is a hopeful side to all of this.

We are now beginning to realize that, as George Steiner has reminded us, a man who is intellectually advanced can at the same time be morally bankrupt. We now know that such a man can listen to Bach and Schubert at sundown. He can read Goethe in the evening, and the next day go to his daily work at the concentration camp to gas his fellowmen. "What grows up inside literate civilization," Steiner asks, "that seems to prepare it for the release of barbarism?"

Steiner's comment not only highlights our dilemma but also dramatizes our sharpened insights. We are losing faith in the childish notion that all education, regardless of its quality, or thrust, or purpose, will lead to virtue. We are beginning to understand that education does not inevitably humanize. And we are beginning to recognize that if education is to exercise a moral force in society, then the process of education must take place in a moral context.

This is not to suggest a program of indoctrination that suffocates the spirit, neither does it mean theory courses that become only speculative and remote.

What is called for is a framework of inquiry in which the process of wrestling with big issues and complex values is made fully legitimate--a place where the climate does not push for conclusions, but rather makes honorable the quest.

And this search for education with a special meaning has been, and must continue to be, one of the fundamental purposes of the Nation's nonpublic institutions.

This then is the rich tradition of nonpublic education which we share--the richness of diversity, the commitment to excellence, and the deep concern for the yearnings of the human spirit.

The United States Office of Education and all of us in this administration are determined to sustain and strengthen in all appropriate ways this great heritage.

To achieve this goal we first are determined to increase our communication with your institutions. Soon after I arrived in Washington, I was delighted to discover that the Office of Education had an Office of Nonpublic Schools. I was doubly pleased that Dwight Crum was its director. I found Dwight to be a top flight professional. He has my full confidence and I intend to keep him where he is and support him fully in his work.

Further, I intend to strengthen dramatically the educational liaison function in the Commissioner's office by coordinating all of the offices and giving Dwight Crum and his colleagues absolutely open and continuous access to me personally. We will have regular meetings with the staff. My monthly calendar will be coordinated by Dwight and other liaison officials. We will soon be creating an 800 "hotline" telephone number in my office so that each of you will have immediate access to the Commissioner's office.

I pledge, in short, that the nonpublic education office in OE will be assigned top priority and will receive more aggressive and sustained support than it has ever had before.

Second, I also plan to increase the advisory role of nonpublic schools in the work of OE.

I firmly believe that representatives from nonpublic schools should participate as consultants in our activities. Already your contributions have been frequent and highly valued. Bob Lamborn has done a splendid job in helping to put together this important conference. Fewer than two weeks ago Bob was involved in a planning conference dealing with the Technical Assistance Brokerage System. Dr. Lamborn was also a member of the group studying the continued effects of Title I programs. And next month CAPE will participate in a workshop studying Title IV consolidated programs. CAPE also has been involved in meetings regarding the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. And we recognize, with appreciation, the contribution made recently by your organization during OE's celebration of American Education Week. Representatives of the private schools will be named to various national educational advisory councils and already we have made such nominations to the appropriate appointing agency.

This continued involvement is essential.

Third, and perhaps most significant of all, we are determined to see to it that nonpublic school children are fully served by those OE programs for which they are eligible.

Many of you have felt frustrated by the unevenness of our performance here and I share your frustration.

The right of nonpublic school children to participate in a number of federally funded programs has been clearly established, and yet the record of delivery has been spotty.

But I want you to know that we will not accept careless administration in this essential matter. Service to children in nonpublic schools can and must increase, and in this regard I find it encouraging that earlier this month the Council of Chief State School Officers adopted a policy statement that calls for "each state to provide educational benefits to all children to the full extent allowable."

There are constraints of course and our actions must be guided by court interpretation of the Constitution.

Further, some legislation carefully spells out the manner in which such children in nonpublic institutions are to be served--Title I and Title IV for instance--while other legislation is less specific.

Also while the laws refer to "equitable" treatment, even that word "equitable" has been differently interpreted.

There <u>are</u> problems in our providing service to children in nonpublic schools and yet that does not lessen the responsibility of the United

States Office of Education or of the individual state departments of education to ensure that all eligible children are served according to the law.

We will see to it that this objective is vigorously pursued. I'm looking for ways to secure from states a more precise statement as to how they intend to serve nonpublic schools. My goal is to get states to be more energetic and specific in their planning for nonpublic schools' needs. I intend to ask each OE Bureau chief to list how his program can relate more effectively to the private institutions. I'm considering the creation of a new unit in OE, drawing both on the Title I program resources and the Office of General Counsel, in order to process the requests for Title I bypass more swiftly and more fairly.

Finally I will welcome any suggestions you may have as to how we may serve you better, and as Rabbi Goldenberg suggested so gently yesterday, we must convert into deeds our well intentioned words.

And this leads me to one final point. Samual Drury in the book entitled, School Mastery, said that: "Public schools and nonpublic schools are partners in a vast countrywide necessity. They can," he said, "teach each other."

I happen to share the conviction of Samuel Drury. America's public and nonpublic schools can indeed establish a partnership of great consequence and they can learn from one another.

While leading a large public institution in New York for many years it seemed very clear to me that the purpose of education would be advanced only if the public and the independent institutions shared a common vision and worked vigorously together to promote their common ends.

For years I fought aggressively for increased state financial support for students to help close the public-private tuition gap. Constantly I supported direct aid to the private institutions. And as the first State University Chancellor to be named President of the statewide public and private college association in New York, I pushed for a united front.

The point is simply this: While there are differences in the origins and the traditions in the governance of institutions, all of us in education can still share a common vision for our students. We are determined to eliminate prejudice and promote full access for all students. We are determined to push for excellence. And we seek to develop within each student a condition which may be called the educated heart.

This easy label, the educated heart, means to me--a reverence for natural and human life and a respect for excellence. The educated heart means an appreciation of beauty, a tolerance of others, a reaching for mastery without arrogance, a courtesy toward opposing views, a dedication to fairness and social justice, an adherence to integrity and precision in thought and speech, an openness to change, and a love for graceful expression and audacious intellect.

These are lofty--and some would say--old fashioned goals. And yet I am

confident that as we work together this dream can be fulfilled for all our students at both public and nonpublic schools.

Thank you very much for your splendid leadership and thanks again for inviting me to meet with you tonight.

I wish you well.